

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

The President's Weekly Address

August 6, 2016

Every 4 years, our Nation's attention turns to a competition that's as heated as it is historic. People pack arenas and wave flags. Journalists judge every move and overanalyze every misstep. Sometimes we're let down, but more often we're lifted up. And just when we think we've seen it all, we see something happen in a race that we've never seen before.

I'm talking, of course, about the Summer Olympics. This month, Rio is hosting the first-ever Games held in South America, and we're ready to root on Team U.S.A. We're excited to see who will inspire us this time, whose speed will remind us of Jesse Owens, whose feats will remind us of Bob Beamon's amazing jump? Which young American will leave us awestruck, the way a teenager named Kerri Strug did when she stuck that landing, and when another kid named Cassius Clay gave the world its first glimpse of greatness? Who will match Mary Lou Retton's perfection or pull off an upset like Rulon Gardner's or dominate like the Dream Team?

That's why we watch. And we have a lot to look forward to this year. Team U.S.A. reminds the world why America always sets the gold standard: We're a nation of immigrants that finds strength in our diversity and unity in our national pride.

Our athletes hail from 46 States, DC, and the Virgin Islands. Our team boasts the most women who have ever competed for any nation at any Olympic Games. It includes Active Duty members of our military and our veterans. We've got basketball players who stand nearly 7 feet tall and a gymnast who's 4-foot-8. And Team U.S.A. spans generations: a few athletes who are almost as old as I am and one born just a year before my younger daughter.

Our roster includes a gymnast from Texas who's so trailblazing, they named a flip after her, a young woman who persevered through a tough childhood in Flint, Michigan, to become the first American woman to win gold in the boxing ring, and a fencing champion from suburban Jersey who'll become the first American Olympian to wear a hijab while competing. And on our Paralympic team, we're honored to be represented by a Navy veteran who lost his sight while serving in Afghanistan and continues to show us what courage looks like every time he jumps in the pool.

When you watch these Games, remember that it's about so much more than the moments going by in a flash. Think about the countless hours these athletes put in, knowing it could mean the difference in a split-second victory that earns them a lifetime of pride and gives us enduring memories. It's about the character it takes to train your heart out, even when no one's watching. Just hard work, focus, and a dream. That's the Olympic spirit, and it's the American spirit too.

In our Olympians, we recognize that no one accomplishes greatness alone. Even solo athletes have a coach beside them and a country behind them. In a season of intense politics, let's cherish this opportunity to come together around one flag. In a time of challenge around the world, let's appreciate the peaceful competition and sportsmanship we'll see, the hugs and high-fives, and the empathy and understanding between rivals who know we share a common humanity. Let's honor the courage it takes, not only to cross the finish line first, but merely to

stand in the starting blocks. And let's see in ourselves the example they set: proving that no matter where you're from, with determination and discipline, there's nothing you can't achieve.

That idea, that you can succeed no matter where you're from, is especially true this year. We'll cheer on athletes on the first-ever Olympic Refugee Team: ten competitors from the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Syria who personify endurance.

To all of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes wearing the red, white, and blue, know that your country couldn't be prouder of you. We admire all the work you've done to get to Rio and everything you'll do there. Thank you for showing the world the best of America. And know that when you get up on that podium, we'll be singing the national anthem—and maybe even shedding a tear—right alongside you.

Now go bring home the gold!

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:50 a.m. on August 5 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on August 6. In the address, the President referred to long jumper Bob Beamon, gymnasts Kerri Strug and Mary Lou Retton, and wrestler Rulon Gardner, U.S. Olympic Team members who won Gold Medals in 1968, 1996, 1984, and 2000, respectively; gymnast Simone Biles, table tennis player Kanak Jha, boxer Claressa Shields, and fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, members, 2016 U.S. Olympic Team; and swimmer Brad Snyder, member, 2016 U.S. Paralympic Team. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 6. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Beamon, Bob; Biles, Simone; Gardner, Rulon; Jha, Kanak; Muhammad, Ibtihaj; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Retton, Mary Lou; Shields, Claressa; Snyder, Brad; Strug, Kerri.

Subjects: Brazil : 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro; Immigration and naturalization : American "melting pot"; Sports : Olympic Games; Sports : Paralympic Games; Veterans : Service and dedication.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600516.